

## Autumn Term 2015

### *This term in school...*

*Welcome to my Headteacher's Letter. Sent home termly it will let you know what's happening in school: at a leadership level, for the whole school and in the classroom.*

Now in my third year as Headteacher of Amherst it is a chance to reflect on the achievements of last year and also focus on the development priorities for this year.

Firstly, welcome to all new children and families in Year 3 and other year groups. I hope your first weeks at Amherst have been a positive experience. The Buddy system in Year 3 continues to be a success and helped aid transition into Year 3, especially on the first morning. It has been wonderful to observe many Year 3 children grow in confidence already as the year progresses. I always enjoy their sense of keenness to be at a new school and the things they are excited about (such as the swimming pool!) help remind all of us why Amherst is such a great school. Their enthusiasm and energy is infectious.

Each year part of the school's performance is judged by the Year 6 SATs results. The children are assessed in May of Year 6 in Reading, Writing, Maths, Science and Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar. In all areas of attainment the school performed above the national average, and by a considerable amount in many areas. Level 6 attainment in Maths is outstanding. The children's progress is also assessed. This is a measure based on their KS1 SATs results (end of Year 2) and their KS2 SATs results (end of Year 6). The expectation is that children will make two levels progress such as Level 2 to Level 4 or Level 3 to Level 5. We continue to have a focus on improving progress in writing and it is pleasing to see a 13.3% increase in the last two years. As you will be aware, this was the last year that national curriculum levels will be used to assess children's attainment and progress. In May 2016 Year 6 will still sit SATs tests but the outcome will be a standardised score against a national standard. These tests will also be assessing the children against the new national curriculum which is considerably more challenging than the previous year. Teachers and children are working very hard to ensure our current Year 6 (and all years) is as prepared as possible to do their best.

### Attainment

	Level 4+				Level 5+			
	2013	2014	2015	National	2013	2014	2015	National
<b>Combined Reading, Writing and Maths</b>	88.4%	86.5%	92.6%	80%	35.4%	39.6%	42.1%	24%
<b>Reading</b>	94.8%	94.8%	96.8%	89%	62.5%	81.3%	69.4%	48%
<b>Writing</b>	86.5%	86%	93.7%	87%	37.5%	44.8%	44.4%	36%
<b>Maths</b>	92.7%	91.7%	93.7%	87%	76%	72%	68.4%	42%
<b>Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar</b>	88.5%	93.8%	93.7%	80%	60.4%	75%	76.8%	56%

Level 6+				
	2013	2014	2015	National
<b>Reading</b>	1%	1%	0%	0%
<b>Writing</b>	0%	5.2%	3.3%	2%
<b>Maths</b>	22%	32%	34%	9%
<b>Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar</b>	5%	15%	11%	4%

### Progress

	2013	2014	2015	Local Authority
<b>2+ Levels of Progress Reading</b>	81.3%	95.4%	91.2%	91%
<b>2+ Levels of Progress Writing</b>	76.9%	86.4%	90.2%	94%
<b>2+ Levels of Progress Maths</b>	93.5%	90%	93.5%	90%

I am so proud that at Amherst, we develop the whole child; excellent English and maths teaching and learning, coupled with a broad curriculum enhanced by an amazing range of extra-curricular activities. Exam results are important but so is history, computing, sport, music and the arts. We want every child to develop a passion and expertise for something beyond English and maths. It is so important that every child is recognised for their talents. High self-esteem is the key to all learning and ensuring children have positive emotional well-being. Thank to you to all the teaching staff for their hard work last year to enable the children to achieve so well.

At the beginning of every year schools write a School Improvement Plan. I would like to share with you the three key priorities on our school improvement plan for this year:

- To increase the progress of more able children in writing by having quicker access to more challenging tasks within lessons.
- To improve the deployment of Teaching Assistants to ensure all TAs have a specialism that can provide an intervention programme.
- To continue develop the most effective way to assess pupil progress and attainment since the removal of national curriculum levels.

There are twenty three objectives in total on the school improvement but five further objectives of particular interest to you as parents are:

- To develop a Mastery approach to the teaching and learning of maths.
- To improve the quality of children's handwriting - particular focus in Year 3.
- To introduce a new approach to the teaching of spelling.
- To improve the behaviour and table manners of children when eating lunch in the hall.
- To install an astro turf pitch (approx. size of a tennis court) at the side of the field to enhance delivery of the PE curriculum and additional space for ball games at playtime and lunchtime.

I hope you found this week's Parents' Evening a positive and informative experience. We are coordinating an Open Afternoon the week before each Parents' Evening this year. I want you to have the opportunity for your child to share their work with you which will allow you to enter Parents' Evening with a greater understanding of your child's current achievements. We have continued with the online booking system and using the location of the hall following positive parental feedback. The bell helps us all run to time and the addition of a film for children to watch in the IT Suite has improved things further. The next Open Afternoon is on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March at 2.45pm followed by Parents' Evening on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March. We will also be sending home our annual parent questionnaire at the beginning of December. Please take the time to complete it as your feedback, both positive and negative, is very much appreciated.

I continue to teach a different class each Friday morning. I miss having my own class as a teacher and as a Headteacher really enjoy this opportunity to teach. It enables me to get to know the children better (at least learn their names!) and also get a feel for how their class is progressing. The children get to know me as a teacher and a person, which helps develop positive relationships. It also ensures that any whole school strategies and initiatives are firmly rooted in improving teaching and learning.

If you ever feel the need to come and speak to me please don't hesitate to contact the office. If I am available I am always happy to chat immediately and if not, to make an appointment.

On a personal note, we are adjusting to life as a family of five. Edward is now four months old and doing well. James and Florence are enjoying having a baby brother. If I ever look a little tired, it is not the toil of school life but a few sleepless nights! I look forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas Bazaar, Christmas Production and Carol Service.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid